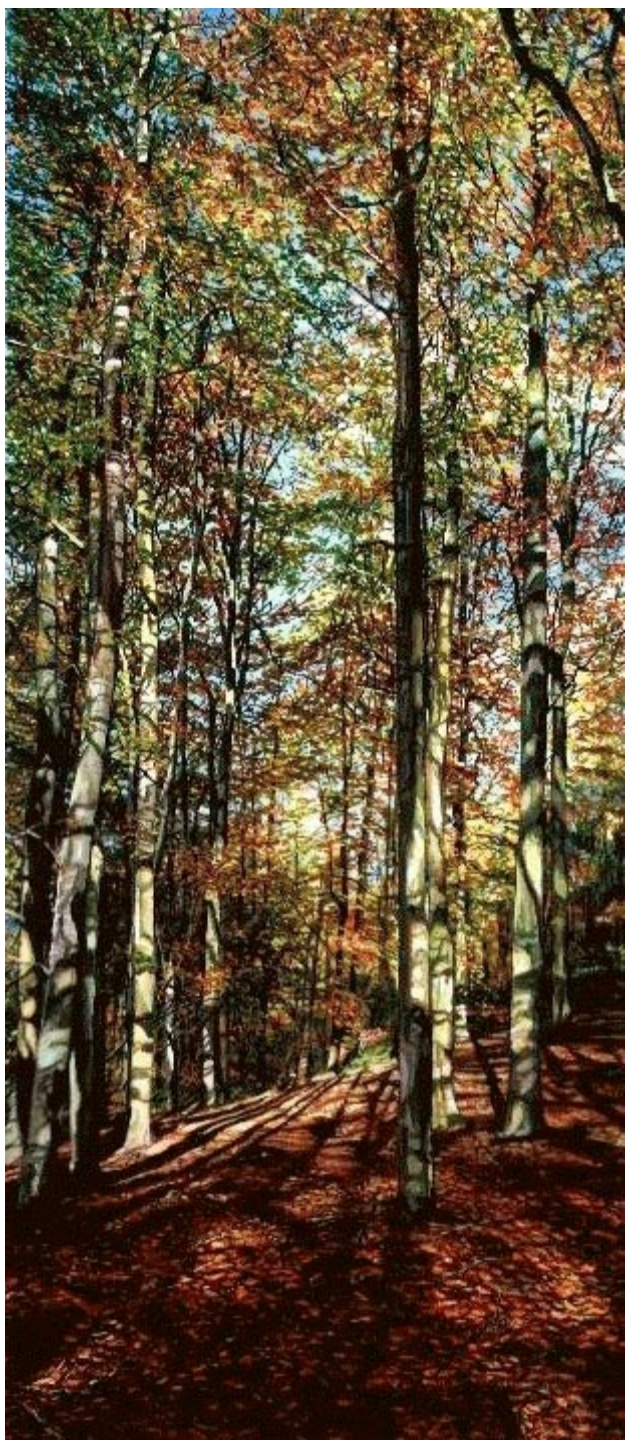
A Necessary Remembering



Preface

Three texts, and two letters, first published over a decade ago, which concern personal feelings and thoughts connected to my extremist and suffering-causing past. As described in one of the texts:

"Most important of all, it was not something I did, not something I read or studied or thought, and not some sudden 'revelation' or epiphany related to some religion or to some belief, that fundamentally changed me. Instead, it was something entirely independent of me; something unexpected, traumatic, outside of my control and my experience, involving someone I personally knew, and indeed whom I loved, or as much as I – the selfish survivor – was capable of love.

For would I, without personally suffering that personal trauma, have changed? Would I, without such a personal trauma, have been even capable of discovering and then accepting the truth about myself and the truth about the harsh interpretation of a Way of Life I then adhered to and the truth about an ideology I had previously adhered to and believed in for some three decades? No, I would not. For I was too arrogant; too enamoured with my certitude-of-knowing; far too selfish, and far too vitalized by some ideology or by the dogmatism of a particularly harsh interpretation of some faith. It is little wonder, therefore, that since that personal trauma I have pondered, over and over again, on certain philosophical, ethical, metaphysical, questions; seeking to find at least some answers, however fallible." The Consolation Of A Viator

David Myatt
February 22nd 2026

I.

No Words Of Mine Can Describe The Remorse

Yesterday was one of those glorious English Summer days of warm Sun, blue sky, when I - after a long walk - had sat down in the tufted grass on that slope of a hill to view the vista below. The river curving as it curved through the hedged-in fields of crops and pasture; the far distant greenful hills unclear in heat-made haze; the country lane that, now devoid of vehicles, would give access again to scattered houses and those well-separated working farms. It felt - perhaps was - paradise on Earth, for I fortunate to have water, food enough to feed me for a day; clothes and boots - though worn - sufficient for their purpose; even a place - dry, undamp, with bed - to sleep such sleep as might by night be gifted. It felt - and was - good to be alive, touched a little and for a while by some type of inner peace. So little, so very little, really needed...

The problem in the past had been me, my lack of understanding of myself and my egoism. It was my fault: not the place, not the time, not the people, for I so desired with that arrogance of youth to exchange this paradise, here, for those ideas, the idealism, the abstractions, I carried around in my prideful hubriatic head. Seldom content, for long, since happiness came with - was - the pursuit, or the gratification of my personal desires. So destructive, so very destructive. So hurtful, inconsiderate, selfish, profane.

The defining moment, for me – in terms of understanding myself, in terms of understanding politics and the error of my decades of extremism – was the tragic personal loss of a loved one in May 2006. In the hours following that event I just knew – tearfully knew without words – my own pathetic failure; what I had lost, what was important. Thus there came upon me that day a sense of overwhelming grief, compounded by a remembrance of another personal loss of a loved one thirteen years earlier. For it was as if in those intervening years I had learned nothing; as if I had made the life and the dying and death of Sue, in 1993 – and of what we shared in the years before – unimportant.

I have no words to describe how insignificant, how worthless, I felt that day in May 2006; no words to describe, recall, retell, the remorse, the pain. Suffice now to recount that my life was never, could never be, the same again. Gone – the arrogance that had sustained me for so many experiential decades. Gone – the beliefs, the abstractions, the extremisms, I had so cherished and so believed in. That it took me another three years, from that day, to finally, irretrievably, break the bonds of my Shahadah sworn six years earlier – and the oath of personal loyalty that I believed still bound me to one person still alive then in a far distant land – most certainly says something more about me, about my character, about my interior struggles.

Thus it was that I came to know, to feel, how irrelevant politics and political organizations were for me, personally. So that ever since I have had no desire whatsoever to involve myself in politics – or even in trying to somehow change the world be it by politics, or by religion, or by whatever. Instead, my concern has been to try to [fully] understand and thence reform myself; to reflect upon my four decades of diverse involvements, discovering as I did those involvements for the extremisms they were; and to try to, and finally sans all abstractions, answer important questions such as Quid Est Veritas.

As I wrote in my May 2012 essay *Pathei-Mathos, Genesis of My Unknowing*:

> "What I painfully, slowly, came to understand, via pathei-mathos, was the importance – the human necessity, the virtue – of love, and how love expresses or can express the numinous in the most sublime, the most human, way. Of how extremism (of whatever political or religious or ideological kind) places some abstraction, some ideation, some notion of duty to some ideation, before a personal love, before a knowing and an appreciation of the numinous. Thus does

extremism – usurping such humanizing personal love – replace human love with an extreme, an unbalanced, an intemperate, passion for something abstract: some ideation, some ideal, some dogma, some ‘victory’, some-thing always supra-personal and always destructive of personal happiness, personal dreams, personal hopes; and always manifesting an impersonal harshness: the harshness of hatred, intolerance, certitude-of-knowing, unfairness, violence, prejudice.

Thus, instead of a natural and a human concern with what is local, personal and personally known, extremism breeds a desire to harshly interfere in the lives of others – personally unknown and personally distant – on the basis of such a hubriatic certitude-of-knowing that strife and suffering are inevitable. For there is in all extremists that stark lack of personal humility, that unbalance, that occurs when – as in all extremisms – what is masculous is emphasized and idealized and glorified to the detriment (internal, and external) of what is muliebral, and thus when some ideology or some dogma or some faith or some cause is given precedence over love and when loyalty to some manufactured abstraction is given precedence over loyalty to family, loved ones, friends.

For I have sensed that there are only changeable individual ways and individual fallible answers, born again and again via pathei-mathos and whose subtle scent – the wisdom – words can neither capture nor describe, even though we try and perhaps need to try, and try perhaps (as for me) as one hopeful needful act of a non-religious redemption."

Therefore I have no political views now; I do not and cannot support any political organization, as I do not adhere to nor believe in nor support any particular religion or even any conventional Way of Life. All I have are some personal and fallible answers to certain philosophical, personal, ethical, and theological, questions. No certainty about anything except about my own uncertainty of knowing and about the mistakes, the errors, of my past.

Having written so much - far too much - for so many decades and having made so many suffering-causing mistakes, I also have no desire now to write anymore about anything, except perchance for a few missives such as this, as part perhaps of my needed expiation, and in explanatory reply when asked of certain things. Such as in exposition of my mistakes, my remorse, and particularly in explanation of the personal love, the gentleness, the compassion, the humility, the peace, that I feel - feel, not know - might possibly enable us to find, to feel, our paradise on Earth, and so not cause suffering, not add to the suffering that so blights this world and has so blighted it for so long, mostly because of people such as me. The ideologues, the extremists, the fanatics, the terrorists, the bigots, the egoists. The unhumble ones unappreciative of the numinous: those whose certainty of knowing - and those whose sense of a personal 'destiny' - makes them uncompassionate, unempathic, hateful, prejudiced, intolerant, and devoted to either 'their cause' or to themselves. Those whose happiness comes with - and is - the pursuit, and/or the gratification of their so selfish desires.

Just how many more seasons - years, decades, centuries, millennia - will we humans as a species need to find and to live our mortal lives in compassionate, empathic, paradisal peace?

June 2012

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Letter To My Undiscovered Self

For nearly four decades I placed some ideation, some ideal, some abstraction, before personal love, foolishly - inhumanly - believing that some cause, some goal, some ideology, was the most important thing and therefore that, in the interests of achieving that cause, that goal, implementing that ideology, one's own personal life, one's feelings, and those of others, should and must come at least second if not further down in some lifeless manufactured schemata.

My pursuit of such things - often by violent means and by incitement to violence and to disaffection - led,

of course, not only to me being the cause of suffering to other human beings I did not personally know but also to being the cause of suffering to people I did know; to family, to friends, and especially to those - wives, partners, lovers - who for some reason loved me.

In effect I was selfish, obsessed, a fanatic, an extremist. Naturally, as extremists always do, I made excuses - to others, to myself - for my unfeeling, suffering-causing, intolerant, violent, behaviour and actions; always believing that 'I could make a difference' and always blaming some-thing else, or someone else, for the problems I alleged existed 'in the world' and which problems I claimed, I felt, I believed, needed to be sorted out.

Thus I as a neo-nazi, as a racist, would for some thirty years and by diatribes spoken, written, rant on and on about these alleged problems: about 'the Jewish/Zionist problem, about 'the dangers of race-mixing', about the need for 'a strong nation', about 'why we need a revolution', about 'the struggle for victory', about 'the survival of the Aryan race', and so on and so on. Later on, following my conversion to Islam, I would - for some seven or so years - write and talk about 'the arrogance of the kuffar', about 'the need for a Khilafah', about 'the dangers of kufr', about 'the need for Jihad against the kuffar', and so on and so on.

Yet the honest, the obvious, truth was that I - and people like me or those who supported, followed, or were incited, inspired, by people like me - were and are the problem. That my, that our, alleged 'problems' (political/religious), were phantasmagoriacal; unreal; imagined; only projections based on, caused by, invented ideas that had no basis in reality, no basis in the simple reality of human beings. For the simple reality of most human beings is the need for simple, human, things: for personal love, for friendship, for a family, for a personal freedom, a security, a stability - a home, food, playfulness, a lack of danger - and for the dignity, the self-respect, that work provides.

But instead of love we, our selfish, our obsessed, our extremist kind, engendered hate. Instead of peace, we engendered struggle, conflict, killinInstead of tolerance we engendered intolerance. Instead fairness and equality we engendered dishonour and discrimination. Instead of security we produced, we encouraged, revolution, violence, change.

The problem, the problems, lay inside us, in our kind, not in 'the world', not in others. We, our kind - we the pursuers of, the inventors of, abstractions, of ideals, of ideologies; we the selfish, the arrogant, the hubriatic, the fanatics, the obsessed - were and are the main causes of hate, of conflict, of suffering, of inhumanity, of violence. Century after century, millennia after millennia.

In retrospect it was easy to be, to become, obsessed, a fanatic, an extremist - someone pursuing some goal, someone identifying with some cause, some ideology; someone who saw 'problems' and felt such 'problems' had to be sorted out. For such extremism, such goals, fulfilled a need; they gave a sense of identity; a sense of belonging; a sense of purpose. So that instead of being an individual human being primarily concerned with love, with and responsible for personal matters - the feeling and issues and problems of family, friends, loved ones - there was a feeling of being concerned with and part of 'higher more important things', with the inevitable result one becomes hard, hardened, and thence dehumanized.

Easy to be thus, to be an outward extremist; just as it is easy for some other humans (especially, it seems, for men) to be and remain extremists in an inner, interior, way: selfish, hubristic, arrogant, unfeeling, and thus obsessed with themselves, their physical prowess, and/or subsumed by their personal desires, their feelings, their needs, to the exclusion of others. For - despite our alleged, our believed in, 'idealism' - we the outward extremists were, we had become like, those selfish, hubristic, arrogant, unfeeling humans; only that instead of being slaves to our personal desires, feelings, needs, we were enslaved to our ideals, our goals, our ideologies, our abstractions, and to the phantasmagoriacal problems we manufactured, we imagined, or we believed in.

In essence, it was a failure of humanity on our, on my, part. A failure to see, to know, to feel, the human - the individual - reality of love, of peace. A failure to personally, as individuals, be empathic, compassionate, loving, kind, fair.

For love is not some ideal to be striven for, to be achieved by some supra-personal means. It is just being human: among, with, other humans, in the immediacy-of-the-moment. From such a human, individual, love - mutual and freely given, freely returned - there is peace: tranquillity, security.

That it took me four decades, and the tragic death of two loved ones, to discover these simple truths surely reveals something about the person I was and about the extremisms I championed and fought for.

Now, I - with Sappho - not only say that,

> I love delicate softness:
> For me, love has brought the brightness
> And the beauty of the Sun [1]

but also that a personal, mutual, love between two human beings is the most beautiful, the most sacred, the most important, the most human, thing in the world; and that the peace that most of us hope for, desire in our hearts, only requires us to be, to become, loving, kind, fair, empathic, compassionate, human beings.

For that we just have to renounce our extremism, both inner and outer.

February 2012

Notes

[1]

ἔγω δὲ φίλημμ᾽ ἀβροσύναν [...] τοῦτο καί μοι
τὸ λάμπρον ἔρως ἀελίω καὶ τὸ κάλον λέλογχε.

Sappho, poetic fragment: P. Oxyrhynchus. XV (1922) nr. 1787 fr. 1 et 2

II.

The Consolation Of A Viator

Gloria vero quam fallax saepe, quam turpis est.
Unde non iniuria tragicus exclamat:
῏Ω δόξα, δόξα, μυρίοισι δὴ βροτῶν
οὐδὲν γεγῶσι βίοτον ὤγκωσας μέγαν

For most of my life – and to paraphrase what someone once wrote – I have been a selfish being, prideful and conceited, and would still be so were it not for the suicide of a woman I loved. For not only did I often use words to deceive, to manipulate, to charm, but I also deluded myself, since I really, arrogantly, believed that I was not a bad person and could always find some excuse (for myself and for others) to explain away what in objective terms amounted to selfish behaviour, just as – by adhering to the idea of patriotism, or to some political ideology or to some harsh interpretation of some religion – I had a sense of identity, found a purpose, to vivify, excite, entice, and provide me with excuses to be deceitful, manipulative, prideful, conceited, and violent; that is, with a raison d'être for being who and what I was by instinct, by nature: a reprehensible arrogant opinionated person who generally placed his own needs, or the apparent demands of some ideology or some dogma, before the feelings – before the happiness – of others.

But am I, as one correspondent once wrote to me almost two years ago, being too hard on myself? I do not

feel I am, for when she asked why I cannot “show the same compassion and forgiveness to your younger self that you could show to someone else who had made mistakes earlier in life,” I (somewhat pompously) replied: “Because that would not – probably could never – be a neutral point of view, for there are memories, a remembering, of deeds done and a knowing of their suffering-causing effects on others. It is not for me to seek – to try – to forget; not for me to offer myself expiation. For I sense that to do so would be hubris and thus continue the periodicity of suffering.”

For unfortunately I – with such a prideful, conceited, selfish nature – am no exception; just as the type I represented has been no exception throughout our history as sentient beings. Indeed, my particular type is perhaps more reprehensible than the brutish barbarian archetype that many will associate with those humans who survive by natural, selfish, instinct alone. For not only did I live in the prosperous West (or in colonial outposts of the West) but I had the veneer of culture – the benefits of a classical education, a happy childhood – and so could converse (although often only in my then opinionated manner) about such things as music, art, literature, poetry, and history. In many ways, therefore, I was the archetypal paradoxical National-Socialist: a throwback, perhaps, to those educated, cultured, Germans who could and who did support and then fight for the demagogue Hitler and who, in his name, could and did commit, or ignore or make excuses for, nazi atrocities.

Most important of all, it was not something I did, not something I read or studied or thought, and not some sudden 'revelation' or epiphany related to some religion or to some belief, that fundamentally changed me. Instead, it was something entirely independent of me; something unexpected, traumatic, outside of my control and my experience, involving someone I personally knew, and indeed whom I loved, or as much as I – the selfish survivor – was capable of love.

For would I, without personally suffering that personal trauma, have changed? Would I, without such a personal trauma, have been even capable of discovering and then accepting the truth about myself and the truth about the harsh interpretation of a Way of Life I then adhered to and the truth about an ideology I had previously adhered to and believed in for some three decades? No, I would not. For I was too arrogant; too enamoured with my certitude-of-knowing; far too selfish, and far too vitalized by some ideology or by the dogmatism of a particularly harsh interpretation of some faith. It is little wonder, therefore, that since that personal trauma I have pondered, over and over again, on certain philosophical, ethical, metaphysical, questions; seeking to find at least some answers, however fallible.

Perhaps most of all – and especially in the past year – I have thought about the nature of suffering; its causes, genesis, and its possible alleviation through or because of such things as education, pathei-mathos, and a knowing of or assumptions concerning whether our sentient life has a meaning, and if so what this meaning might be.

In respect of causes, there is, for example, the question of good individual character and bad individual character, and how we can distinguish – or even if we can distinguish and know – the good from the bad. There is, in respect of possibly in some way alleviating or not causing suffering, the question of culture; and the question of whether culture can fundamentally change us in character – as a species gifted with the faculties of speech and reason – in sufficient numbers world-wide so that we cease the cause the suffering we inflict and have for millennia inflicted on our own kind and on the other life with which we share this planet. Which leads to questions regarding our future if we cannot so change ourselves; and to questions concerning laws and education and authority. And thence, of course, to the raison d'être of “the body politic as organized for supreme civil rule and government.”

In respect of suffering, one of the questions we might ask is how much suffering have we humans, in the past year and around the world, inflicted on our own kind? How many murdered, how many injured and maimed? How many humiliated, subjected to violence? How many women raped, beaten, injured? How many human beings have been tortured or suffered injustice? How many human beings have been manipulated, deceived, exploited, lied to, or had possessions stolen? How many have died of preventable hunger or curable disease? How many have endured or been forced to endure poverty? How many homeless, how many made refugees? How much more of Nature have we destroyed or exploited in the

past year in our apparent insatiable need for, or in greedful desire to exploit, Earth's resources, biological, physical, or otherwise?

Furthermore, how much of the suffering inflicted on our own kind is personal, the consequence of some uncontrolled or uncontrollable personal emotion, desire, or instinct? And how much inflicted is due to some excuse – some idea or abstraction – we as individuals use, have used, or might use: excuses such as some war, some armed conflict, some ideology, some political extremism, some interpretation of some religion? How much inflicted because of 'obeying some higher authority' or some chain of command? How much because 'we' had a certainty-of-knowing that we (or our cause, or our State, or our nation, or our faith, or our ideology, or our organization, or our government) were right and that 'they' (the others) were wrong and/or they 'deserved' it and/or it needed to or had to be done in the interest of some idea or some abstraction, such as 'our' security, 'our' (or even 'their') freedom or happiness, or because our laws made it acceptable?

We might go on to ask whether the personal suffering caused is greater this year than last. Whether the suffering caused by or on behalf of some excuse – some idea or abstraction – is greater this year than last. Greater than a decade ago? Less than that caused a century ago? A millennia ago? And would such a crude measure of suffering – were it even possible to ascertain the figures – really be an indicator of whether or not we as a species have changed? And have modern States and nations – with their armies, their governments, their schools, their universities, their culture, their forces and institutions and traditions of law and order – really made a difference or just caused more suffering?

But do – or should – these questions matter? Asking such questions returns me to the question of whether our sentient life has a meaning, and if so what this might be, and thence to questions concerning good and bad personal character, and thus to what it is or might be for us, as individuals, wise to seek and wise to avoid.

Interpreting Life

Based on my limited knowledge, and according to my certainly fallible understanding, it seems to me that interpretations of our mortal life are often predicated on a specific cause or origin. For a religious interpretation, this is often God, or Allah, or the gods, or an inscrutable mechanism such as karma, with – it is claimed – such a 'first cause' revealing to us the truth concerning our existence. In the case of God, or Allah, it is that we were created and placed on this Earth as a way to attain immortality (Heaven, Jannah), and, in the case of karma, it is nirvana [the wordless nibbana], attainable for example by the Noble Eightfold Way as explained by Siddhartha Gautama.

For many non-religious, but material, interpretations the specific cause is our own perception, or consciousness, or feelings; with the truth concerning our existence then being, for example, (i) that it is only we ourselves who create or can create or who should create a meaning or give a value to our existence; or (ii) that what is most valuable is our personal happiness and/or our freedom, a freedom from such things as suffering, fear, and oppression.

For many non-religious, but spiritual, interpretations the specific cause is our 'loss of balance or our loss of harmony' with Nature and/or with existence itself; with the truth concerning our existence then being to regain that natural balance, that harmony (which it is assumed most of us are born with); and regain by, for example, a virtuous living respectful of others, or by acquiring – and living according to – reason, or by moderation in all things, or by trying to avoid causing suffering in other living beings, human and otherwise by, for example, embracing 'love' and 'peace' and thus being loving and non-violent.

Personally, and as a result of my pathei-mathos and several years reflecting on various philosophical questions, I favour a non-religious, but still rather spiritual, interpretation where there is no assumed loss of some-thing but rather where there is only that type of apprehension – that individual perceiveration – which provides us as individuals with an often wordless but always numinous awareness of our own, individual, life in a cosmic (supra-personal) context. There is then no yearning or necessity to attain or

regain some-thing because there is no-thing to attain or regain, and thus no techniques, no practices, no special manner of living, no journey, no ἄνοδος, from 'here' to 'there'. For such a yearning or assumed necessity – however expressed, such as in terms of Heaven, Jannah, nirvana, harmony, immortality, peace, and so on – implies or manifests or can manifest a separation of 'us' from 'them', manifest for example in 'those who know' (or who believe or who assert they know) and those 'others' who as yet do not know, giving rise to a certain hierarchy; of those who believe or who assert they can teach or reveal this knowing – and the means to acquire or attain the assumed goal or regain what has been lost – and of those who are, or who can be, or who should be, taught or 'enlightened'.

Interestingly, this perceiveration of ourselves in a cosmic context is acausal: there are no hierarchies, no posited primal cause, no-thing lost or to be acquired (or reacquired), and no-thing that needs to be (or which can be) described to others in any emotive manner or by means of some abstraction or some idea/form. There is only a particular and a personal and quite gentle awareness: of ourselves as a microcosmic, viatorial, fleeting, effluvium [1] of the Cosmos, but an effluvium which is not only alive but which has a faculty enabling us (the effluvia presenced as a human being) to be perceptful of this, perceptful of how were are connected to other effluvia and thus perceptful of how what we do or do not do can and does affect other effluvia and thus the Cosmos itself. For the perceiveration is of our φύσις, of us as – and not separate from – the Cosmos; of living beings as the Cosmos presenced (embodied, incarnated) in a particular time and place and in a particular way; of how we affect or can affect other effluvia, other livings beings, in either a harmful or non-harming way. An apprehension, that is, of the genesis of suffering and of how we, as human beings possessed of the faculties of reason and of empathy, have the ability to cease to harm other human beings.

In respect of the genesis of suffering, this particular perceiveration provides an important insight about ourselves, as conscious beings; which insight is of the division we make, and have made, consciously or unconsciously, between our own being – our selfhood, ipseity – and that of other living beings, and of that personal ipseity having or possibly having some significance beyond our own finite mortal life either in terms of some-thing (such as a soul) having an opportunity to live on elsewhere (Heaven, Jannah, for example) or as our mortal individual deeds having had a long-lasting causal effect on others.

While it can be argued, and has been argued, that this division exists – is a re-presentation of the current (and past) reality of our existence as conscious, thinking, beings – what is important is not whether it does exist or whether it may be an illusion, but rather (i) that the perceiveration of 'the acausal' is an intimation of what is beyond the current (and the past) personal ipseity (real or assumed), and (ii) that it is such personal ipseity (real or assumed) which is the genesis of suffering, and (iii) that this understanding of the genesis of suffering affords us an opportunity to consciously change ourselves, from our current (and the past) real/assumed personal ipseity, and thus, so being changed, no longer cause or contribute to suffering.

How then can we so consciously change? By cultivating and manifesting in our own lives the personal virtues of empathy, compassion, and humility. For it is these virtues which, by removing us from our ipseity – by making us aware of our affective connexion to other life – make us aware of suffering and its causes and prevent us, personally, from causing suffering to other living beings, human and otherwise.

Thus, my personal answer to the question of good and bad personal character is that a person of good personal character is someone who is or who seeks to be compassionate, who has a numinous sympatheia for other living beings, and who is modest and self-effacing. And it is wise to avoid causing or contributing to suffering not because such avoidance is a path toward nirvana (or some other posited thing), and not because we might be rewarded by God, by the gods, or by some divinity, but rather because it manifests the reality, the truth – the meaning – of our being, and which truth is some consolation for this particular viator.

May 2014
In Loving Memory of Frances, who died May 29th 2006

Note

[1] I have chosen to use the term effluvium here, in preference to emanation, in order to avoid any potential misunderstanding. For although I have often used the term emanation in my philosophy of pathei-mathos as a synonym of effluvium, 'emanation' is often understood in the sense of some-thing proceeding from, or having, a source; as for example in theological use where the source is considered to be God or some aspect of a divinity. Effluvium, however, has (so far as I am aware) no theological connotations and accurately describes the perceiveration: a flowing of what-is, sans the assumption of a primal cause, and sans a division or a distinction between 'us' – we mortals – and some-thing else, be this some-thing else God, a divinity, or some assumed, ideated, cause, essence, origin, or form.

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The title of this essay was inspired by a passage in the 1517 translation by William Atkynson of a work by Thomas à Kempis, a translation published as *A Full Deuout and Gostely Treatyse of the Imytacyon and Folowynge the Blessed Lyfe of Our Moste Mercyfull Sauyour Cryste*.

III.

Catholic Still In Spirit?

Perhaps I remain, partially at least, a Catholic in spirit – in my heart – though not, most of the time, in words and deeds. For while I intellectually and empathically disagree with the teachings of the Catholic Church on many matters – such as homosexuality, contraception, and on divorcées who have remarried being excluded from Holy Communion (unless they have resorted to a Papal Annulment) – I still find myself in my inner weakness not only sometimes frequenting the Lady Chapel of my nearest RC Church – lighting a candle, kneeling, and in reverent silent contemplative prayer remembering, in the felt presence of The Blessed Virgin Mary, those now dead loved ones such as my mother and father and Sue and Francis, and those other women hurt by my selfishness – but also travelling several times a year to where Gregorian chant is sung and where the Tridentine Mass is celebrated, bringing as such Latin chant and such a Latin Mass still do, in me, a renewed awareness of the numinous and a renewal of such humility as I strive – and sometimes still so often fail – to remember and feel.

There seems to me no intricate and difficult interior problem here derived from my somewhat paganus way of pathei-mathos, for that way is essentially – for me, even born as it is from my own pathei-mathos – rather intellectual, a perceiveration, lacking as it does something outward, practical, supra-personal, and communal, to presence the numinous and thus affect one's very being in a spiritual way. So I seem to now exist – and have for several years existed – between two worlds: apparently emotionally needing something practical, living, and spiritual beyond myself and my intellectualism, and yet knowing in a rather unemotional manner that it is the way of pathei-mathos, and not Catholicism, which is my weltanschauung.

No intricate and difficult interior problem, no inner dichotomy, because I know the many flaws in my weltanschauung and in myself; and one cannot intellectually create some-thing – manufacture some-thing devoid of ψυχή – to presence the numinous. For it seems to me that such a presencing has to evolve, organically, over causal time, because it has been wordlessly presenced in other mortals and then kept alive because also felt by some of a newer generation. Will – can – such a presencing of the numinous arise from that way of pathei-mathos? Most probably not, intellectual and so very personal as it is.

So the need for some inner, numinous, sustenance remains; for fulfilling as a lot of classical music – such as the Cantatas of JS Bach – is and are, and fulfilling as walks alone in wild and rural Nature are, I sense a

yearning in me for something more: some wordless intimation of the Divine which betakes me so far away from my still egoistic self that I am both awed and humbled again, as I often was in Winter wandering a darkened cloister as a monk in that quiet contemplative time between Matins and Lauds.

2015

Extract From A Letter To A Friend

IV.

Numinous Expiation

One of the many problems regarding both The Numinous Way and my own past which troubles me – and has troubled me for a while – is how can a person make reparation for suffering caused, inflicted, and/or dishonourable deeds done. For, in the person of empathy, of compassion, of honour, a knowledge and understanding of dishonour done, of the suffering one has caused – perhaps before one became such a person of compassion, honour, and empathy – is almost invariably the genesis of strong personal feelings such as remorse, grief, and sorrow. The type of strong feelings that Christopher Marlowe has Iarbus, King of Gaetulia, voice at the end of the play *The Tragedie of Dido Queene of Carthage*, written c.1587:

> Cursed Iarbas, die to expiate
> The grief that tires upon thine inward soul.

One of the many benefits of an organized theistic religion, such as Christianity or Islam or Judaism, is that mechanisms of personal expiation exist whereby such feelings can be placed in context and expiated by appeals to the supreme deity. In Judaism, there is Teshuvah culminating in Yom Kippur, the day of expiation/reconciliation. In Catholicism, there is the sacrament of confession and penance. In Islam, there is personal dua to, and reliance on, Allah Ar-Rahman, Ar-Raheem, As-Salaam.

Even pagan religions and ways had mechanisms of personal expiation for wrong deeds done, often in the form of propitiation; the offering of a sacrifice, perhaps, or compensation by the giving or the leaving of a valuable gift or votive offering at some numinous – some sacred and venerated – place or site.

One motivation, in the case of pagan religions and ways, for a person to seek expiation is fear of *wrake*; fear of the retribution or of the misfortune, that – from the gods – might befall them or their descendants in this life. Similarly, for those acceptive of an all-knowing, all-seeing supreme deity – or even of the Buddhist mechanism of karma – there is also fear of wrake; fear of the punishment, the retribution, the misfortune, that might await them in the next life; or, in the case of Buddhism, the type of life that might result when next they are reborn.

As the Owl explains in the mediæval English religious allegory *The Owl and the Nightingale*,

> ich wat þar schal beo niþ & wrake
>
> I can see when there shall be strife and retribution [1]

All such religious mechanisms of expiation, whatever the theology and regardless of the motivation of the individual in seeking such expiation, are or can be cathartic; restorative, healing. But if there is no personal belief in either a supreme deity or in deities, how then to numinously make reparation, propitiation, and thus to not only expiate such feelings as remorse, grief, and sorrow but also and importantly offset the damage one's wrong actions have caused, since by their very nature such suffering-causing actions are *ὕβρις* and not only result in harm, in people suffering, but also upset the natural balance.

In truth, I do not know the answer to the question how to so numinously make reparation, propitiation. I can only conject, surmise. One of my conjectures is enantiodromia; of the process, mentioned by Diogenes Laërtius and attributed to Heraclitus, of a wholeness arising both before and after discord and division [2]. This wholeness is the healthy, the numinous, interior, inward, and personal balance beyond the separation of beings – beyond *πόλεμος* and *ὕβρις* and thus beyond *ἔρις*; beyond the separation and thence the strife, the discord, which abstractions, ideations, encourage and indeed which they manufacture, bring-into-being. As Heraclitus intimated, according to another quotation attributed to him –

> *εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἐόντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ΄ ἔριν καὶ χρεώμενα [χρεών]*
>
> One should be aware that Polemos pervades, with discord *δίκη*, and that beings are naturally born by discord. [3]

But what, then, in practical personal terms are this wholeness and this process termed enantiodromia? To me, this wholeness is a knowing and an acceptance of both the importance of the numinous principle of *Δίκα* [4] and the necessity of wu-wei [5] – and a knowing which empathy can provide – and thence a desire to live life in a non-interfering manner consistent with empathy, compassion, reason, honour, and humility. And it is this very knowing, this very desire to live in such a manner, which is enantiodromia; which is cathartic, restorative, healing; with a natural humility and the cultivation and practice of reason – *σωφρονεῖν*, a fair and balanced judgement – being the essence of this personal process, the essence of enantiodromia.

For the human virtue of humility is essential in us for us not to repeat our errors of *ὕβρις*, a humility which our *πάθει μάθος* makes us aware of, makes us feel, know, in a very personal sense. For we are aware of, we should remember, our fallibility, our mortality, our mistakes, our errors, our wrong deeds, the suffering we have caused, the harm we have done and inflicted; how much we personally have contributed to discord, strife, sorrow.

In addition,

> ” …by and through humility, we do what we do not because we expect some reward, or some forgiveness, given by some supra-personal supreme Being, or have some idealized duty to such a Being or to some abstraction (such as some nation, some State) but because it is in our very nature to do an act of compassion, a deed of honour: to do something which is noble and selfless.That is, we act, not out of duty, not out of a desire for Heaven or Jannah, or enlightenment or some other “thing” we have posited – not from any emotion, desire or motive, not because some scripture or some revelation or some Buddha says we should – but because we have lost the illusion of our self-contained, personal, identity, lost our Earth-centric, human-centric, perspective, lost even the causal desire to be strive to something different, and instead just *are*: that is, we are just one microcosmic living mortal connexion between all life, on Earth, and in the Cosmos. For our very nature, as human beings, is a Cosmic nature – a natural part of the unfolding, of the naturally and numinously changing, Cosmos.” [6]

Thus a personal humility is the natural balance living within us; that is, we being or becoming or returning to the balance that does not give rise to *ἔρις* Or, expressed simply, humility disposes us toward gentleness, toward kindness, toward love, toward peace; toward the virtues that are balance, that express our humanity.

This personal humility inclines us toward *σωφρονεῖν*; toward being fair, toward rational deliberation, toward a lack of haste. Toward a balanced judgement and thence toward a balanced life of humility, we-wei, and a knowing of the wisdom of *Δίκα*.

There is nothing especially religious here, nor any given or necessary praxis. No techniques; no supplication to some-thing or to some posited Being. No expectation of reward, in this life or some posited next life. Only an interior personal change, an attempt to live in a certain gentle, quiet, way so as not to intentionally cause suffering, so as not to upset the natural balance of Life.

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Notes

[1] v.1194. The text is that of the Cotton Caligula MS in the British Library as transcribed by JWH Atkins in *The Owl and the Nightingale*, Cambridge University Press, 1922.

[2] The quotation from Diogenes Laërtius is: *πάντα δὲ γίνεσθαι καθ' εἱμαρμένην καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐναντιοδρομίας ἡρμόσθαι τὰ ὄντα* (ix. 7)

My translation is: *All by genesis is appropriately apportioned [separated into portions] with beings bound together again by enantiodromia.*

As mentioned in *The Abstraction of Change as Opposites and Dialectic*:

> I have used a transliteration of the compound Greek word – *ἐναντιοδρομίας* – rather than given a particular translation, since the term enantiodromia in my view suggests the uniqueness of expression of the original, and which original in my view is not adequately, and most certainly not accurately, described by a usual translation such as 'conflict of opposites'. Rather, what is suggested is 'confrontational contest' – that is, by facing up to the expected/planned/inevitable contest.
>
> Interestingly, Carl Jung – who was familiar with the sayings of Heraclitus – used the term enantiodromia to describe the emergence of a trait (of character) to offset another trait and so restore a certain psychological balance within the individual.

[3] Fragment 80 – qv. *Some Notes on Πόλεμος and Δίκη in Heraclitus B80* and also *The Balance of Physis – Notes on λόγος and ἀληθέα in Heraclitus*.

As I noted in *The Abstraction of Change as Opposites and Dialectic*, it is interesting that:

> "in the recounted tales of Greek mythology attributed to Aesop, and in circulation at the time of Heraclitus, a personified *πόλεμος* (as the *δαίμων* of kindred strife) married a personified *ὕβρις* (as the *δαίμων* of arrogant pride) [8] and that it was a common folk belief that *πόλεμος* accompanied *ὕβρις* – that is, that Polemos followed Hubris around rather than vice versa, causing or bringing *ἔρις*."

[4] In respect of the numinous principle of *Δίκα*, refer to my short essay *The Principle of Δίκα*.

[5] As mentioned elsewhere, wu-wei is a Taoist term used in my philosophy of The Numinous Way "to refer to a personal 'letting-be' deriving from a feeling, a knowing, that an essential part of wisdom is cultivation of an interior personal balance and which cultivation requires acceptance that one must work with, or employ, things according to their nature, for to do otherwise is incorrect, and inclines us toward, or is, being excessive – that is, is *ὕβρις*. In practice, this is the cultivation of a certain (an acausal, numinous) perspective – that life, things/beings, change, flow, exist, in certain natural ways which we human beings cannot change however hard we might try; that such a hardness of human trying, a belief in such hardness, is unwise, un-natural, upsets the natural balance and can cause misfortune/suffering for us and/or for others, now or in the future. Thus success lies in discovering the inner nature of things/beings/ourselves and gently, naturally, slowly, working with this inner nature, not striving against it."

I first became acquainted with the concept of wu-wei when, as a youth living in the Far East, I studied Taoism and a learnt a martial art based on Taoism. Thus it might be fair to assume that Taoism may well have influenced, to some degree, the development of my weltanschauung.

[6] The quote is from my essay *Humility, Abstractions, and Belief*.

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